

Reviews

Deep Blue



Deep Blue is a 90 minute theatre film based on the award winning BBC series, Blue Planet. This was a big budget series of eight 50 minute documentaries narrated by Sir David Attenborough and was several years in the filming.

To reduce 400 minutes down to 90 must have been a difficult task indeed but it has resulted in a visual feast of the highest quality accompanied by a soundtrack by legendary composer George Fenton which contributes almost as much as the excellent footage. The soundtrack is expansive without being too sweet and is, like the whole film, beautifully paced.

Whilst the Blue Planet was a traditional natural history documentary with comprehensive narration, Deep Blue lets the images and soundtrack do the work with only limited input from the narrator Michael Gambon. His voice is richer and much more effective for this big screen version.

Deep Blue has been well received at cinemas in Germany and will open here in the UK on June 18th at about 30 selected cinemas nationwide. I was



pleased to be invited to a press screening which was in a small preview theater in London. The screen was not very large but this became irrelevant as the images transported me in to my favourite environment. I would think that the Deep Blue on a large cinema screen with a full sound system should be an unmissable event. Make a note in your diary.

I do have one final point to make, however. I understand that the natural world is largely unsentimental and accepts hardship and death as a daily risk but I was concerned about the orca footage showing it flinging a helpless sealion pup into the air and the even more graphic sequence of orcas separating a whale calf from her mother and then drowning it before eating only its tongue and jaw. The footage was breathtaking but I couldn't stop myself thinking that I was, in effect, watching a natural history 'snuff' movie.

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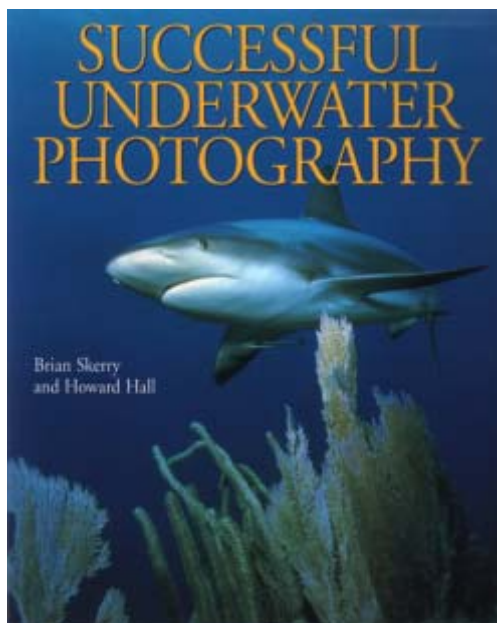
Successful Underwater Photography by Brian Skerry and Howard Hall

This 10.5" x 8.5" 144 page book is a reworking of Howard Hall's original title first published in 1982. This new version, as well as being much larger in size, also contains many more excellent photographs, mainly from Brian Skerry.

There are fourteen chapters including useful information in an attractive layout. The chapters follow a logical flow - Fundamentals, Light underwater, Equipment, Available light, Silhouettes, Extension tubes, Reflex macro, Wildlife portraits, People, Shipwrecks, Close focus wide angle, Auto focus and exposure and finally Selling your work.

The big attraction of the original version for me was that the photographs included very detailed captions about the location, subject behaviour, how the shots were achieved as well as full camera details and settings. Effectively, it gave you everything you needed to know to achieve a similar shot. The new version follows the same delivery for the most part but there is a high percentage of photographs which have very little camera details and virtually no caption save naming the subject. Personally I think a good educational photo book should have the full details for each photo accompanying them otherwise there is little point in including them. It's a shame that this book doesn't for all its excellent photos.

This version was revised in 1982 without much fanfare so it's section on digital is minimal to say the least. If they ever need to reprint they should provide full captions for every photo and include a comprehensive section of several chapter on digital techniques and equipment and then they would have a world beating title.



Shark by Mark Carwardine

The combination of Mark Carwardine and BBC Books is an exciting prospect especially when the subject matter is sharks and this latest book certainly doesn't disappoint.

As I'm sure you know, there have been more books about sharks than any other marine creature because they appeal to our basic fear - the fact that this fear has been generated in the main by the media is by the by.

This 168 page 11" x 11" book is attractively laid out and very thorough in its coverage of the subject matter. The photographs are excellent but it annoys me that the credits are all on the back page so if you want to know who took a particular photo you've got to go to the back page and search for the page number as they are not listed numerically. This may not irk most readers but I think it does underwater photographers.

That aside, 'Shark' is a most comprehensive and engaging look at this fascinating species which is both understood and misunderstood in so many ways. 'Shark' gives both sides of the argument logically and informatively and you get a deep sense personal involvement from the author. This is not just a book it is a crusade by a professional enthusiast whose writing is intelligent without being highbrow and informative without being dumbed down.



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